

ICMA PARTNERSHIP AWARD – KIWANIS TOWERS

Problem assessment, the challenge or need that prompted the local government to develop the program

The City of Richmond is experiencing rapid population growth, with those aged 65+ increasing more significantly than any other age group. By the year 2041, an increase of 39,703 (124%) additional seniors is anticipated. Low socio-economic status among Richmond's seniors is a growing concern with the 2011 Census data indicating that 52.2% of older adults (ages 65+) have an after-tax income of less than \$20,000. The United Way reports that 8.5% of older adults in Richmond receive the maximum Government Income Supplement, which is the largest percentage in Metro-Vancouver. These facts, along with the changing senior government funding climate, prompted the City to identify affordable seniors housing as a priority for the use of developer contributions to the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund.

Previously, the Kiwanis Seniors Citizens Housing Society (Kiwanis) operated a seniors' housing facility, consisting of 122 affordable housing units on a significantly underutilized site in Richmond's City Centre neighbourhood. As the development was nearing the end of its lifespan and the Society did not have adequate contingency funds to cover the extent of the necessary repairs, Kiwanis saw an opportunity to redevelop and increase the number of rental units for low-income seniors.

After searching for two years to partner with a developer, Kiwanis partially financed redevelopment through the sale of a portion of its site to a local development company, Polygon, and also selected Polygon to redevelop the seniors' housing. In order to support the project with

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limited availability of senior government funding, the City pursued an opportunity to create a innovate development financing tool.

Program implementation and costs

For this project to proceed, an innovative approach to the application of the City’s Affordable Housing Strategy was required. The City developed a “Special Development Circumstance” which allowed the developer (Polygon) to contribute cash-in-lieu, rather than built units, from a number of their Richmond sites to make Kiwanis, a large-scale affordable housing project, financially viable. This project specific rate was developed in consultation with land economist G.P. Rollo and Associates, and was based on the difference between the cost to produce a unit and the average market value of the affordable housing units. Through this innovative funding mechanism, the City was able to provide approximately 38% of the estimated construction costs, including:

- Providing \$20.8 million (in increments over five years) from current and future development contributions to the City’s Affordable Housing Reserve, and
- Covering Development Cost Charges, Service Cost Charges and Municipal permit fees (approximately \$3.3 million).

Tangible results or measurable outcomes of the program

Meeting Future Demand for Affordable Senior’s Housing

The Kiwanis Towers Project increased the availability of affordable seniors housing units by over 240% (from 122 to 296 units) and created 700ft² of amenity space and community gardens for seniors programming. Kiwanis remains the owner and operator of the project and is responsible for the selection of eligible tenants.

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Aging-In Place and Community Building

Kiwanis was designed using a Campus of Care model, which takes into consideration social-spatial planning and networked service provision. The main advantage for concentrating seniors in the City Centre is the proximity to Minoru Park, Richmond Hospital, City Centre Community Centre, Minoru Place Activity Centre (seniors centre), Richmond Library and Cultural Centre, Minoru Aquatic Centre, shops and transit. Proximity to these amenities decreases social isolation and increases both community building and active living. Eighty-nine percent of the units (264 units) were built to satisfy universal housing design guidelines. These features support aging in place, mobility, and accessibility for residents and guests by being adaptive to aging individuals' changing physical needs. Further, Simon Fraser University's Placemaking Research Project, facilitated by the City Richmond, made recommendations for a healthy built and social environment and ways to improve service gaps for seniors in the community. This research has resulted in resident satisfaction with their new community and helped Kiwanis build relationships with service providers that emphasize healthy living and aging.

Environmental Sustainability

With respect to environmental sustainability, the Kiwanis Towers were designed to support energy efficiency. Specifically, a sustainable design limited the mechanical cooling needed throughout the individual units as the building was designed in a way to maintain a comfortable temperature and achieve utility costs savings for Kiwanis and the tenants (making living costs more affordable).

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Lessons learned during planning, implementation, and analysis of the program.

This project is a successful example of the City’s ability to adapt to a changing senior government funding climate and municipalities may want to consider this approach as an innovative solution to the redevelopment of aging housing projects. Specifically, other local governments may wish to consider approaches implemented by the City of Richmond through affordable housing strategies, “special development circumstances,” innovative partnering and integrated planning efforts between multiple stakeholders.

Other lessons learned in working through the various stages of this project include:

- The importance of integrated planning, design and a multi-stakeholder approach (i.e. transparency, streamlined processes, and shared outcomes).
- The need to consider life-cycle perspectives (e.g. aging in place features, social programming, building a sense of community).
- Innovative partnerships to develop successful projects with limited senior government funding.

A City of Richmond “Kiwaniis Affordable Seniors Housing Case Study” presentation, the Affordable Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing Value Transfer mechanism may be shared with other municipalities. As mentioned, the City is also in the process of applying its policy innovations to other City partnership projects, such as the Storeys development. This project will provide 129 units of affordable rental housing and supportive programming space for vulnerable Richmond residents, including those at risk of homelessness.

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How the program raises awareness of the contributions of Local Government Managers

City officials coordinated actions among a number of partners and stakeholders at all stages of the process, thereby raising awareness of the critical roles that municipalities can play in developing innovative projects to meet growing community need. Acknowledgement and appreciation of City manager roles was raised among partners and stakeholders, including:

- Richmond MLAs and MPs
- Kiwanis Senior Citizens Housing Society (Owner and Operator)
- Polygon Developments (Development and Construction Management)
- BC Housing
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Minoru Seniors Society
- Community Service Agencies
- Simon Fraser University Gerontology Department
- Richmond residents, and particularly senior

Furthermore, the Kiwanis Towers Project received the 2015 UBCM Award of Excellence in Innovation for Partnerships, raising awareness of the role played by Richmond City Managers by UBCM members and 2015 Convention delegates, which including other City Managers, Mayors and Councillors from throughout the Province, BC Ministers and MLAs.